A Few Words from our New Chairman

We have had a few Board meetings with me as the new Chairman, and we continue to carry on our business with continuity as a few of us players settle in to our new roles.

The Board has approved an easement for a water line across our property to the new Vintage Park construction site. The line should not interfere with any activity at our Site, and we don’t expect any impact on our daily operations. The Vintage Park Living Center is scheduled for completion in 2009.

A new policy has been written and approved by the Board regarding awards issued for service to TCHS. In addition, a new award has been established – the Distinguished Service Award. A person may be considered for the Distinguished Service Award based on certain criteria, among which are five or more years of exemplary service in a position of significant responsibility.

A special Thank You goes to member Larry Ross for work done to refurbish one of the old picnic tables that had once been a fixture at the Tonganoxie Swimming Pool. Thanks also to Charlie Ussery and Himpe1 Lumber for their generous donation of lumber and hardware for this project.

- Al DiSanto, Chairman

Highlights from Annual Picnic

Our annual picnic was held on June 28th and as usual the food was superb. We thank Lloyd Pearson and Delbert Felts for serving as our cooks for the evening and Janet Angell-Felts for serving as our hostess.

The evening began with perfect picnic weather, a little windy but with nice shade alongside the Reno Church. The tables were being set up, chairs arranged, and grills prepared when Lloyd discovered a leak in one of the lines leading to a propane tank. A loud “poof” was heard, followed by fire engulfing the entire propane tank. After shutting off the valve, Lloyd quickly recovered and after checking to ensure that all his hair and eyebrows were still intact, he and Delbert did an excellent job with the grilling.
In lieu of music this year, George Cooper entertained us by reading a few political anecdotes of Will Rogers, many of which apply perfectly to today’s political agenda.

Before departing for the evening, George presented a Distinguished Service Award to Susy Ross for her years of service as our Museum Director. Also mentioned was service by Del Englen, who was not present.

Many museums in the surrounding areas have either city or county funding, which allows them to be open on a full-time basis and to employ a full-time Curator, perhaps other paid employees. Although TCHS is a totally volunteer organization, every effort is made to stay abreast of up-to-date information relating to archival preservation, restoration, and storage. With this in mind, it is hoped that everyone who wishes to donate their valuable treasures to our Museum will know that their heirlooms will receive the best possible care and will be preserved for years to come.

In the museum . . . .

White Sewing Machine c. 1890

The White Sewing Machine Company was founded in 1858 in Templeton, MA by Thomas White, age 22. When the company began, the first machine sold for $10, and due to minimum finances, the machines were made as they were sold. The first machine labeled as “White” was a vibrating-shuttle model introduced in 1876. The most popular model was the “White Family Rotary” model, manufactured in the late 1890s, with production continuing in various models into the 1950s.

The machine shown above was first owned by Dorothy Koehn in the 1890s, and was given to her granddaughter Coleen Anton in 1939. Originally bought in Kansas, it traveled to Nebraska, Texas, Colorado, Utah, and then back to Kansas. It was donated to TCHS by member Coleen Anton.
Volunteer Spotlight

Lloyd and Jean Pearson have been active members of TCHS for about five years. Lloyd, one of our “every Wednesday” volunteers, serves as a Board member and also does the buying for the ballpark concession stand. He keeps the stand stocked with food and supplies so it is ready to open each evening.

Jean is in charge of securing the hostesses for each meeting and is in charge of the Vintage Quilt Show every year during Tongie Days at the Site. This marks the fourth year for this quilt show.

Lloyd was born in Junction City, Kansas, the fifth child in a family of nine. He worked for KDOT for 43 years as a surveyor and later as an inspector. He saw the construction of I-70 from design phase through completion during the 1950s and 1960s. Retired for nine years, Lloyd keeps busy with gardening, carpenter work, and attending the grandkids’ sporting events. He also helps out at the Good Shepherd when needed.

Jean was born near Council Grove, Kansas. One of three girls, she grew up not too far from Lloyd’s home. After raising her children she worked for 20 years at the accounting and tax office in Tonganoxie. Jean is a quilter, not just stitching the quilts, but doing the actual quilting. She quilts at the Rifford Center, and is active at the Good Shepherd Thrift Shop, where she serves as secretary of the board and is manager of the shop one day each week.

Congratulations . . .

Life Member Shirley Martin is retiring from her job at the Tonganoxie Post Office after 30 years of service. Shirley says she is not sure what she will do next, but knows she will continue to work in some capacity, perhaps something that will allow her to spend more time with her grandchildren, and do some of the things she has been saving until retirement day. Congratulations to Shirley on this milestone!

Museum News

Carol Slawson, Howard Fields, Laurie Walters, and Betty Englen have been measuring, cutting, and installing protective film on the museum windows. Each of the windows in the barn requires careful measurement, as they are all different sizes. The film will help protect items in the museum against sun damage.

Member Fred Leimkuhler is donating copies of his pen and ink drawings of local school houses to be sold in the Museum, with proceeds benefiting TCHS. Other drawings by Leimkuhler are featured on note cards which are available for purchase in the Museum Gift Shop, and several of his original paintings depicting local historical sites are on permanent display in the Museum. Our thanks to Fred for all the knowledge and support he provides to our Historical Society.

The Tonganoxie Library has donated two oak bookshelves to us, which we will use for storage. They also donated several genealogy books and materials for use in the future, when a research room becomes a reality.
Membership Report

The first half of 2008 has seen our membership rolls expand, and we welcome and appreciate everyone who has chosen to join us. It is rewarding to see this interest in the organization. If you would like to become a volunteer but do not know what opportunities are available, we would love to hear from you. Call or stop by the Site.

New Members:
Tony Baker Leavenworth
Dennis & Pamela Barba Leavenworth
Carol Bradbury Tonganoxie
Patty Dickinson Basehor, KS
Annie Dunavin Tonganoxie
Joan & Stan Hughes Tonganoxie
Owen & Amy Lewis Tonganoxie
Mike & Theresa Megee Tonganoxie
Janet Nelson Easton, WA
Tim Phenicie Roeland Park
Carol Ann Smith/Amanda Allen Tonganoxie
Herschel & Jacque Stroud Topeka, KS
Ralph Ungles & Jayne Aylward Tonganoxie
Bud Laming Lawrence
Tongie Days at the Site

Bill Latham displays some of his hand-made models for the Men’s Hobbies display during Tongie Days.

From our Program Chairman

Several of our members have given suggestions and ideas for future speakers and programs. For this I am very grateful, as it makes planning for our meetings much easier. I ask that you continue to pass along your suggestions. While these ideas may not be immediately utilized, they go into a file for future reference, and will be an invaluable asset to anyone who may do this job in the future.

Preview of Coming Attractions

July 22 – Elizabeth Wilson-Agin

Elizabeth Wilson-Agin is a 1994 graduate of Tonganoxie High School. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in Archaeology from the University of Kansas and a Master’s degree in Geophysics from Emporia State University. Wilson-Agin is employed as a Geophysist/GIS Specialist with FPM Group, Ltd. of Oak Ridge, TN; she is internationally known for her research and investigations in locating unmarked graves with geophysical tools. A nationwide speaker, her work has been featured in various publications in the U.S. and throughout Europe, including as a top story on the Yahoo! Homepage.

August 26 – To be announced.
Other Events Around the Area


Aug 16 – Open House – Mugged! A Rogue’s Gallery of Leavenworth Penitentiary Mug Shots. A photographic exhibit of inmate mug shots taken from the early records of the famed prison. A traveling display of the National Archives, the exhibit will be on display beginning Aug 16 thru end of Oct. Also see the museum’s permanent exhibit of prison artifacts. First City Museum, 743 Delaware, Leavenworth. Contact C. VanOrden, 913-682-1866.